

Isthmians 'crucial' meeting ahead

THE Rothmans Isthmian League council meeting on November 29 will have a strong bearing on the future of top class non-league football in the south.

By then, about 30 clubs are expected to have applied for the four vacancies in the second division and officials are busy even now inspecting applicants' facilities. Bexley United is the only Southern League club to have made formal application, but it is understood two others have made tentative enquires and a third could be on the way with others to follow. With their expenses growing at a frightening rate many Southern League clubs are considering their position.

Also up for discussion will be the future of Clapton. In September, the East London club, a founder member of the competition nearly 70 years ago, was warned by the League's officers that they faced the loss of two points for every further caution and five for every sending off once their penalty points total reached 12.

After reaching that critical point, the misbehaviour by the club's players stopped last Saturday, however, it erupted once more, three of their players and the manager were booked at Sutton raising their total in league matches to 16 for the season.

The meeting promises to be a stormy one as several clubs were

upset at the officers' decision made without consultation with them. Although rule 24 states the officers "shall have full power to deal with all offending and defaulting clubs, officials and players as they may think fit," there seems to be a query as to whether or not they can take points away from clubs.

The Football Association is also keeping a watchful eye on the position. It could be that more rule amendments rushed through at the meeting.

Walton and Hersham, bottom of the first division are holding a "save our club" meeting this week. They hope to set up a "fighting fund" meeting this week. They hope to set up a "fighting fund" to stave off the threat of extinction. Unhappy

Walton have lost 20 players and two team managers this season.

Enfield manager Tom Lawrence moved quickly to snap up former England Amateur International forward John Ritchie when he was released by Hereford United. Ritchie, who played for Lawrence at Slough before turning professional with Arsenal, was registered with the Rothmans Isthmian League by telegram on Saturday morning and scored in their 4-1 home win over Totting and Mitcham in the afternoon.

This victory has put Enfield well clear at the head of the league, but with the booking of Mickey O'Sullivan for "hands" their penalty points reached eight which rules them out of

any share of the sportsmanship pool.

Leatherhead forward Chris Kelly went into hospital on Sunday to have a cartilage operation. He is expected to be out of the game until January.

John Overton, the Sutton goalkeeper is also out for some time. John broke an ankle in training.

Bishop's Stortford have won the race to sign Hendon forward Bobby Childs. He is eligible to play in Saturday's F.A. Cup first round tie against Leatherhead as he turned out for Stortford in a match against West Ham recently.

Players on the move: Dagenham have signed Bill Fairchild, Geoff Constable, and Steve Brown. Hayes have signed Barry Lord and Martin James and Carshalton Roy Sharp, whose preview club was Bearea Park, South Africa.

Hampton have re-signed Peter Allen, who was one of their top scorers in their Spartan League days, also Wayne Edwards, John Cumberbatch and Kevin Kalogirou.

With Ilford turning professional last week, a total of 16 Rothmans Isthmian League clubs have now taken the step into the professional ranks. They are: Ilford, Walton and Hersham, Barking, Dagenham, Enfield, Hayes, Leytonstone, Oxford, Slough, Tooting, Woking, Hendon, Carshalton, Chesham, Horsham and Staines.

FOUR BOOKED

CLAPTON, beaten 2-1 by Wycombe a week ago, stand to lose eight Rothmans Isthmian League points if the league council vote to take disciplinary action against the club at their next meeting.

Clapton had previously been warned that if their penalty points total passed the 12 point mark, two league points would be deducted each time a player was cautioned and five if a player was sent off. On Saturday, the Essex club had three players booked — Tommy Lee, John Ford and Brendan

Hoare — and also manager John Harris. That makes a total of eight league points that could be deducted if the league decide to carry through their earlier warning.

Only one club — Dagenham — have yet to concede a penalty point out of the league's 40 clubs. And the "Daggers" have played only 10 matches so far this term. Clapton, of course, have the most, followed by Hayes with 10 and leaders Enfield with seven.